

# King's son says he believes Ray is innocent

By Richard Willing  
USA TODAY

3-28-87

The son of the late Martin Luther King Jr. met face-to-face with his father's convicted assassin Thursday and said for the first time that the King family believes he is innocent.

"I want you to know I believe you and my family believes you," Dexter King told James Earl Ray, who is serving a 99-year sentence for the civil rights leader's 1968 murder.

The televised meeting took place in

a Tennessee prison hospital.

The statement could increase pressure to grant a trial to Ray, who pled guilty in 1969 to shooting King, then changed his mind. He was not allowed to restore his innocent plea.

"It's tremendously important . . . a galvanizing event," said Philip Melanson of the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, a critic of the assassination investigation. "It's the King family saying: 'there are people still out there who killed our father.' How can that . . . be allowed to stand?"

Ray, 68, is said to be dying of liver disease. Tennessee's Court of Criminal Appeals is considering his request for a trial. Prosecutors in Memphis, where King was killed April 4, 1968, are opposed.

King, who wants a trial, told Ray Thursday that meeting him helped him complete a journey. Looking Ray in the eye, King said, convinced him Ray was telling the truth.

Memphis Deputy District Attorney John Campbell called King's statement "amazing" and "discouraging."



First: Dexter King, son of  
meets father's convicted k

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